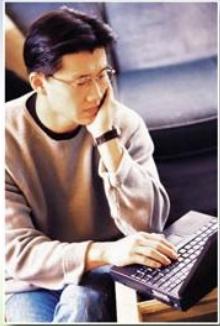


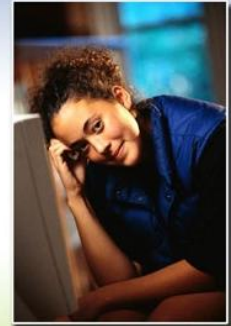
SOUTH CAROLINA VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

Global education, innovation, and student individualization



South Carolina
Department of Education

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South Carolina Virtual School Program Guidelines

CONTENTS

I.	Overview of the South Carolina Virtual School Program	1
II.	SCVSP Sponsorship	1
	A. Sponsor Registration.....	1
	B. Sponsor Responsibilities	2
III.	SCVSP Student Enrollment	2
	A. Student Responsibilities.....	2
	1. Sponsor Approval.....	2
	2. Computer Proficiency and Access.....	3
	3. Online Agreements.....	4
	4. Online Application	4
	B. Parent/Legal Guardian Responsibility	4
	C. SBE Responsibility	4
IV.	SCVSP Course Grades and Units of Credit	4
	A. SCVSP Responsibilities	4
	B. Sponsor Responsibilities	6
	C. Student Responsibilities	7
	D. Instructor Responsibilities.....	7
V.	End-of-Course Examination Program Assessments.....	7
VI.	SCVSP Course-Selection Procedures and Criteria	8
VII.	SCVSP Course Costs	7
VIII.	SCVSP Instructors.....	8
	A. Instructor Employment.....	8
	B. Instructor Qualifications	8
	C. Instructor Requirements.....	8
	D. Instructor Evaluation	9
	E. Instructor Loads.....	9
IX.	Required SCVSP Reports	9
	A. Sponsor Responsibility	9
	B. SCVSP Responsibility	9
	C. SCDE Responsibility	10

I. Overview of the South Carolina Virtual School Program

The State Board of Education (SBE) is authorized under S.C. Code Ann. §§ 59-16-10 through 59-16-80 to “establish the South Carolina Virtual School Program (SCVSP) to ensure consistent high quality education for the students of South Carolina utilizing technology-delivered courses.” These procedural guidelines are based on that legislation.

The SCVSP legislation makes the following stipulations:

- Any public, private, or homeschooled student legally residing in South Carolina who is twenty-one years of age or younger is eligible to enroll in the SCVSP.
- A private school or homeschooled student enrolled in the SCVSP is not entitled to receive any of the services or privileges that are available to public school students other than the right to receive an appropriate unit of credit for a completed course.
- The SCVSP is not a school but a program; therefore, it is not authorized by statute to issue a state high school diploma.

These guidelines—which are predicated on the SCVSP statute, other state statutes, and SBE regulations—are subject to modification by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) only if those statutes or regulations are amended.

II. SCVSP Sponsorship

In order to become a SCVSP sponsor a public school district, a public school, a private school, or a homeschooling parent (statutes that apply to homeschooling are S.C. Code Ann. §§ 59-65-40, 59-65-45, 59-65-46, and 59-65-47) must be registered with the SCVSP.

A. Sponsor Registration

In order to be registered as a SCVSP sponsor, the school district, public school, private school, or homeschooling parent must fulfill the following requirements:

1. have in place a program of studies that leads to a diploma,
2. comply with the policies governing online courses established by the SCVSP,
3. identify the individual(s) who will advise the student regarding courses he or she will need to earn a diploma,
4. identify the individual who will assist the student in resolving any technology issues that may arise, and

5. identify the individual who will be responsible for submitting the names of those students who will need to access the student technology proficiency assessment.

B. Sponsor Responsibilities

All registered SCVSP sponsors must fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. verify that a student is a legal resident of the state of South Carolina before enrolling him or her in the SCVSP, and
2. update sponsor registration information, and
3. respond to a student's request to enroll in a SCVSP course.

A sponsor may forfeit its right to enroll students in the SCVSP if it fails to abide by these requirements.

III. SCVSP Student Enrollment

A. Student Responsibilities

The steps the student must take to formally enroll in a particular course include the following:

1. Sponsor Approval

The student must secure approval to take a specific course from the public school or district or nonpublic sponsor:

- (a) *In-school students*—those who are in membership in a public school (includes homebound, home-placed, and off-campus students and students enrolled in an adult education program)—must have approval from the school principal or his or her designee.
- (b) *Nonpublic school students*—those who are not in membership in a public school but are instead enrolled in a private school or are homeschooled—must have approval from the nonpublic sponsor:
 - (1) the private school that the student attends, or
 - (2) the homeschooling parent/legal guardian
- (c) *Out-of-school students*—those who have not officially withdrawn from a particular public school and are entered in the student database as nonfunded (includes expelled students) or those who have not officially withdrawn from a particular private school—must have from the

district superintendent or the head of the private school. If a district or private school policy does not allow credit to be recorded on an *out-of-school* student's transcript, the student cannot be granted approval to take a SCVSP course.

A sponsor may not give approval to a student to retake a course through the SCVSP if a unit of credit for that particular course is already recorded on his or her official transcript.

A student who is no longer enrolled in any school and who is at least seventeen years of age must enroll in a public adult education program for sponsorship to take a course from the SCVSP.

2. Computer Proficiency and Access

- (a) The student must successfully complete the student technology proficiency assessment in order to enroll in the SCVSP for the first time.
- (b) The student must furnish his or her own computer, or have access to one, and must have Internet access in order to take the SCVSP courses, although the sponsor is not prohibited from providing these.

3. Online Agreements

The student must indicate a willingness to abide by the acceptable-use policy and the SCVSP policies and expectations posted on the SCVSP Web site.

4. Online Application

- (a) The student must complete an online application and select a preferred start date for the course(s) he or she has approval to take.
- (b) The student, upon being notified by the SCVSP that his or her application has been approved, must contact his or her instructor within three days.

B. Parent/Legal Guardian Responsibility

The parent/legal guardian of a student who is seventeen years of age or younger must indicate a willingness to abide by the acceptable-use policy posted on the SCVSP Web site.

C. SBE Responsibility

The SBE will implement a system for prioritizing the students who have enrolled in SCVSP courses if the SCVSP is unable to provide the courses these students need.

IV. SCVSP Course Grades and Units of Credits

A. SCVSP Responsibilities

1. The SCVSP must provide to the student's sponsor a certified grade report specifying the course title, the inclusive course dates, the final numeric grade, the quality points, and the unit value after the student has completed the final exam(s).

The certified grade report for courses requiring an End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) test will be provided to the sponsors of all nonpublic school students after the test has been administered. The final numeric grade on this report will be calculated in accordance with the requirements outlined in Regulation 43-262.4, End-of-Course Tests.

The SCVSP may authorize another entity to provide the grade report to a nonpublic sponsor.

2. The SCVSP must maintain student course records.
3. The SCVSP must limit to three the number of units a student can be awarded in a school year and must limit to twelve the number of units a student can be awarded toward his or her diploma, regardless of the number of sponsors the student has had.

REQUEST FOR WAIVER

A student may file a request to the governing body of his or her SCVSP sponsor for a waiver to exceed the maximum number of units. The request for a waiver must be filed for each unit beyond the maximums.

- (a) The student must submit to the governing body a written application requesting for the waiver.
- (b) The application must be signed by the principal of the sponsoring school or the head of the nonpublic sponsor and by the student's parent or legal guardian.
- (c) The governing body of the student's SCVSP sponsor may consider granting the waiver if all of the following conditions are found to exist:

- (1) the student has successfully completed all prior SCVSP courses,
 - (2) the waiver will facilitate the student's graduation from high school, and
 - (3) there are special circumstances that warrant allowing the student to take additional SCVSP courses.
- (d) The governing body must advise the SCVSP of its decision on the waiver in a written statement and must explain in detail its findings with regard to each of the three required conditions.
4. The SCVSP will post on its Web site a form for the waiver request explained above.

B. Sponsor Responsibilities

1. All sponsors must award the numeric grade, and unit value to the student enrolled in a course through the SCVSP by recording them on the student's transcript in his or her permanent record in the same manner as is done with any other course the student takes.
2. All nonpublic sponsors must contact the district test coordinator in the public school district in which they reside to arrange for students to take the appropriate EOCEP tests online.

Each district must determine whether it will charge nonpublic sponsors a fee for the administration of the EOCEP tests. If a fee is charged, it must be reasonable and must be directly related to the district's added costs for providing this testing service.

3. All sponsors must ensure that the final examination for each course is conducted in a proctored environment.
4. All sponsors must inform the SCVSP when a student is taking a SCVSP course under a school district "content recovery" program.
5. All sponsors must retain for a period of ten years the residency records of every student enrolled in the SCVSP.
6. All sponsors must provide all reports as stipulated in these guidelines.
7. Units earned by a student through the SCVSP will be accepted in the public schools if the student presents his or her grade report from the SCVSP or if his or her transcript reflects the numeric grade and unit value that were recorded on the grade report issued by the SCVSP.

C. Student Responsibilities

1. The student must complete all assignments, course examinations, and state assessments that are required for the particular course in order for the SCVSP to issue the grade report.
2. The student must complete the course requirements within twenty weeks or request an extension from his or her instructor.

D. Instructor Responsibilities

1. The instructor must establish the minimum course requirements that the student must complete.
2. The instructor must consult the SCVSP to determine whether the circumstances surrounding the student's request for a course extension beyond the twenty weeks is warranted.

V. EOCEP Assessments

All EOCEP tests must be administered under the supervision of a public school district in accordance with stipulations specified in the current SCDE EOCEP test administration manual. All test security statutes and SBE regulations in this manual apply to nonpublic sponsors and nonpublic students.

A student who is taking a course for which an EOCEP test is required must take the test online in the school district where he or she resides. If an online testing location is unavailable, the district's test coordinator must find a location in a nearby district. The district's responsibility extends no further than locating the test site.

VI. SCVSP Course-Selection Procedures and Criteria

- A. The SCVSP may offer a particular course only if that course is either
1. required to be offered by Regulation 43-234, Defined Program, Grades 9–12; or
 2. requested by students, parents, or sponsors on the SCVSP online survey; or
 3. requested by a sponsor under circumstances that the SCVSP deems valid.
- B. The SCVSP must ensure that any course it develops, purchases, or contracts meets the following three criteria:
1. is aligned with the state academic standards,

2. integrates high quality Web-based strategies into instruction, and
3. uses the level of technology required for a computer-mediated environment.

VII. SCVSP Course Costs

The SBE will determine when and if the SCVSP may charge fees and tuition.

VIII. SCVSP Instructors

A. Instructor Employment

The SCDE is responsible for employing all SCVSP instructors. Instructors may be employed either as SCDE-classified staff or as SCDE-contracted adjunct staff.

B. Instructor Qualifications

1. A SCVSP instructor must either hold a valid teaching certificate (with attendant training, if required) in the subject area he or she is teaching or receive special approval from the SCDE on the basis of his or her credentials.
2. An in-state SCVSP instructor who does not hold a valid South Carolina teaching certificate or who has not been employed by a South Carolina public school district in the last five years must undergo a criminal records check by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. An out-of-state SCVSP instructor must undergo any criminal records check that the SCDE determines to be necessary.

C. Instructor Requirements

SCVSP instructors must successfully complete all SCVSP pre-service and in-service training requirements. Training topics must include the development and organization of online courses; the technical aspects of online course delivery; the management of virtual classrooms; and the monitoring and assessment of student performance, progress, and achievement.

D. Instructor Evaluation

1. SCVSP instructors who are SCDE-classified staff will be evaluated in accordance with state laws and regulations. SCVSP instructors who are SCDE-contracted adjunct staff employed under state procurement laws will be evaluated on the basis of the same criteria as are SCDE-classified staff.
2. SCVSP instructors must meet all applicable Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) requirements.

E. Instructor Loads

The student load for each instructor is determined by the particular course(s) the instructor is teaching but must not exceed twenty-five course-completing students at any given time.

IX. Required Reports

A. Sponsor Responsibility

School districts and nonpublic sponsors must report to the SCVSP the reason for a student's withdrawal from a course at the time he or she withdraws.

B. SCVSP Responsibility

The SCVSP will report to the SBE annually the following information:

1. the courses being offered through the SCVSP during the current school year,
2. the number of local school districts participating and the number of the district students participating,
3. the number of private schools participating and the number of the private school students participating,
4. the number of home school students participating,
5. the success rates for students by courses,
6. the number of students who withdraw from a course and the reason for each student's withdrawal,
7. the number of students who were prevented from enrolling in a course because of space limitations,
8. the total monies expended by the SCVSP, and
9. the results of the SCVSP online survey of students, parents, and sponsors.

C. SCDE Responsibility

The SCDE will provide the Education Oversight Committee with access to student records annually. All records must contain final course grades and scores on state assessments.